



EMBASSY OF GREECE
ECONOMIC & COMMERCIAL OFFICE

Washington D.C. March 30, 2001

Ref. No. F. 2041/B/420

Dr. Lisa Ferguson
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
Veterinary Services
Import and Export Animals Staff
4700 River Road, Unit 39
Riverdale, MD 20737-1231

Dear Dr. Ferguson,

This letter responds to the need of your Service as to what measures have been taken by the Greek Government in order to prevent the introduction of the Foot and Mouth disease virus into Greece. These measures are composed of both protective measures for intra-community trade taken by the European Commission and supplementary safeguard and control measures taken by the Greek Ministry of Agriculture. The list of measures are referred to the attached notice of the Ministry (I understand that you have already received from other sources the decisions concerning the four affected countries). As you know Greece has been declared and regained its previously recognized status of FMD free country, where vaccination is not practiced, by the World Organization of Animal Health (O.I.E.) since February 2, 2001.

Moreover, regarding the re-evaluation of the proposed measures for the dairy sector by your Service, I would like to assure you that the practices which the Greek producers are applying for the production of the imported into the U.S. hard and soft cheeses, inactivate and destroy the virus. These are the following:

- Feta and yellow hard cheeses (kasseri, kefalotyri, graviera, kefalograviera): The milk is pasteurized at 72°C. After the addition of the acid culture and the rennet, the produced curd (without the retained whey) is put into barrels with brine (for feta) or in a open air or ventilated and cool environment (for yellow hard cheeses), where they are fermented for 2 to 4 months. The PH of the final product is below 6.
- Soft cheeses (mizithra, anthotyro, manouri) are produced from the whey, by-product of feta, which is heat treated at 92°C.

Thank you very much for your kind cooperation. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you need any assistance.

Yours sincerely,

Gerassimos Lazaris

First Secretary (Economic and Commercial)
(enclosed: 3 pages)





HELLENIC REPUBLIC
MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE
D.G. OF VETERINARY SERVICES
ANIMAL HEALTH DIRECTORATE
DEPT. OF INFECTIOUS DISEASES
EPIDEMIOLOGY AND DOCUMENTATION

**NOTICE TO THE INDUSTRY, THE MEDIA
AND THE GENERAL PUBLIC AT LARGE**

**Subject: Current Safeguard and control measures for the prevention
of introduction of FMD virus into Greece.**

1. The dramatic evolution of FMD throughout Europe, already involving UK, France, the Netherlands and Ireland and threatening other member states, represents a very serious threat for the health status of the entire livestock of the EC with potentially devastating economic and social impact.
2. As regards protective measures in intra-community trade Greece is implementing all relevant Commission decisions, in particular :
 - Decision 2001/172/EC concerning UK (and amendments thereof)
 - Decision 2001/208/EC concerning France (and amendments thereof)
 - Decision 2001/223/EC concerning the Netherlands
 - Decision 2001/234/EC concerning Ireland
3. Free circulation of persons and goods in the framework of the single internal market and diminishment of distances due to modern transportation facilities, however, constitute a serious risk of spreading of the disease, to which Greece is not immune.

In order to prevent or at least minimize the above risk, the Directorate General of Veterinary Services, Greek Ministry of Agriculture, has put into force a number of supplementary safeguard and control measures as follows:

- 3.1 By our urgent telex Ref. No 344847/27.02.2001 to the country's Regional Veterinary Services and Border Inspection Posts orders have been given for a special clinical and laboratory investigation of all consignments of live animals originating from "high risk" countries.
- 3.2 By our circular letter Ref. No 344865/06.03.2001 to the Armed Forces General Headquarters, detailed directions were provided for the preventive measures to be implemented before, during and after the entry into Greece of allied forces originating from "high risk"

countries and heading to Kosovo through the seaport and airport of Thessaloniki.

3.3 By our circular letter Ref. No 344864/06.03.2001 to the Civil Aviation Authority, and Customs Services of "Hellenikon" and "Macedonia" airports directions were given to inform travelers and apply precaution control measures for the prevention of introduction of FMD virus via food or other animal products carried in passengers' personal luggage.

3.4 By our circular letter Ref. No 344868/08.03.2001 to the country's Regional Veterinary Services, trade and purchase of live animals by dealers was temporarily banned and additional directions were provided as regards the movement of live animals within the country.

In the same letter we have established the obligation of advance notification and permission issuing from the Directorate General of Veterinary Services, Greek Ministry of Agriculture, prior to the consignment of live animals from any member state to Greece. In this way a modicum of control can be exercised according to the country of origin and the perceived sanitary risk.

3.5 By our circular letter Ref No 344871/09.03.2001 to the Border Inspection Posts, orders have been given for strict and systematic inspections of all live animal consignments imported from third countries, including accompanying documentation, identity and physical inspection as well as laboratory examination.

3.6 By our circular letter Ref No 344889/14.03.2001 to all Veterinary Services, all consignments of live animals from France to Greece after February the 2nd 2001 were specifically identified and a thorough clinical and laboratory inspection was ordered to exclude the possibility of infection.

In the light of subsequent evolution, similar tracing and checks were carried out in animals dispatched by other member states affected by FMD.

3.7 Finally by our circular letter Ref No 359232/26.03.2001 addressed to Customs and Veterinary Services of the ports of Patra and Igoumenitsa specific instructions were given to the effect of pre-notification and systematic documentary and identity checks of all incoming consignments of live animals and products of animal origin dispatched from the Netherlands, Ireland and France in particular.

Date of such consignments is to be properly recorded on a daily basis for reasons of traceability, should the need arises.

The Greek Veterinary Services, in the light of the experience gained by the successful fight against FMD in our country, follow closely the situation and will adopt applicable safeguard and control measures as appropriate.

ISSN 1012-5329

DISEASE INFORMATION



B
13/2/01
24

Vol. 14 -- No. 5

2 February 2001



FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE IN GREECE Restoration of free status without vaccination

Communication dated 1 February 2001 from the OIE Central Bureau:

The OIE Foot and Mouth Disease and Other Epizootics Commission evaluated documentation concerning the eradication of foot and mouth disease, submitted by the Delegate of Greece, and, in accordance with Resolution No. XVII ("Restoration of recognition of the foot and mouth disease status of Member Countries") adopted by the OIE International Committee during its 65th General Session (May 1997), recognised on 25 January 2001 that Greece has regained its previously recognised status of FMD free country where vaccination is not practised.